

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	To support community and personal resilience following the impact of COVID by undertaking a review of the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, allocating funding to support the VCSE sector to deliver services in the communities and providing targeted supported to families with children under the age of 3.
Date of decision:	26.07.2021
Decision maker:	Paul Smith, Interim Director for Adults & Communities
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>Decision taken by Cabinet on 24 June 2021 to approve the COVID 19 Recovery Plan that authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, Director Adults and Communities, Director Children and Families and Director of Public Health be authorised to take all operational decisions to implement recommendation including, but not limited to, the procurement and commissioning of the identified projects (as set out in the detailed action plan)</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=50037702&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158109</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24 June 2021 which provides funding of £6m to support the economy, community wellbeing and organisation with recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included the 'Community Resilience' elements and all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and supportive of the project.</p>
Decision made:	<p>To spend the 600K allocated to this scheme on 3 key areas as listed below to encourage people to access community infrastructure, rebuilding support systems and socialisation and to provide resources into the VCSE sector.</p> <p>VCSE Grant Funding – 440K</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A direct award has been made to Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) to administer grants to support other VCSE organisations to directly deliver provision that connects people into the communities and improves resilience following COVID. • The criteria for grant award will be agreed by the council and will focus on supporting community and personal resilience to aid COVID recovery and increase wellbeing. • There will be a 10% management fee levied by HCF. • Grant recipients will be expected to address identified issues and consider capacity building and future sustainability beyond the funding period. • Early findings from the VCSE Sector Review will help inform grant allocation subject to timescales <p>0-3 years universal offer – 60K</p> <p>Delivery of a grant programme targeted at early years settings and community groups to provide 9 sessions per week for parents and 0-3 year olds broken down into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 South city - 1 North city - 2 Ross

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Golden Valley - 1 Kington - 2 Leominster <p>The sessions will provide parents with young children under 3 to have an opportunity to meet peers and form their own networks to improve mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Libraries £39250.00</p> <p>Funding be allocated to Herefordshire Libraries to support delivery of a programme of activities including enhancing rhyme time, as well as providing access to resources and books for parents to support 0-3 year olds. Deliver specialist training to early year's practitioners and volunteers across the county focusing on speech using rhyme and language.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>The global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus have had an unprecedented impact on the national and local economy and on people's wellbeing and mental (as well as physical) health. Nationally the magnitude of the recession caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, GDP declined by 9.8% in 2020 the steepest drop since records began in 1948.</p> <p>The pandemic has also had a severe impact on people's mental health and wellbeing, due to long periods of anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty. The Herefordshire Community Wellbeing Survey 2021 found 28% of people reported high levels of anxiety, 32% experienced drop in household income, 33% doing less exercise, and 30% sleeping less well. Wellbeing is lowest in those living in the most deprived areas.</p> <p>The council has worked across all directorates to support businesses, residents and communities throughout the pandemic to remain as safe as possible and to prevent and reduce spread of infection and protect those most vulnerable in our society.</p> <p>Our focus now moves towards recovery. Over the coming months the true impact of the pandemic will become better known for the economy, community wellbeing and the organisation.</p> <p>To support the recovery cabinet approved a £6.1m COVID Recovery Plan which includes the economy, community wellbeing and organisation. The recovery plan now focuses on the immediate impactful actions we need to take in the short term. Our priorities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Establish Safe and Welcoming Places</i> - <i>Support Business Viability and Resilience,</i> - <i>Support Employment</i> - <i>Support Wellbeing.</i>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The COVID recovery plan budget allocation must be committed within the 2021/22 financial year, we want to ensure that this money can reach those smaller groups who can really make a difference in our communities and to the residents of Herefordshire.</p> <p>The value of the contract with Herefordshire Community Foundation is above the threshold set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and therefore this contract is not subject to a waiver however the risk of challenge is considered to be low given the fact that Herefordshire Community Foundation are in an almost unique position to deliver the grant programme within the council's timescales given their existing processes and procedures. Legal Services will be involved in drafting the contracts which will include suitable monitoring and clawback provisions.</p>

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	To not provide this support into the VCSE sector and the 0-3 year olds, however following analysis of those who have been most impacted during COVID it shows that children have been greatly impacted and particularly younger children due to the reduced social contact. In addition, the VCSE sector funding will provide direct support into communities across the county to improve health and wellbeing of the whole population.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed:

Paul Smith

Date: 02/09/2021